



## rural development & land reform

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### **RAVELE COMMUNITY WORKING HARD TO PUSH BACK THE HANDS OF POVERTY, UNEMPLOYMENT AND INEQUALITY**

**By Nicholas Magada**

When the agents of the Apartheid regime looked at the Levubu subtropical valley and saw the beauty of the area with its fertile soil, running natural streams hugging the perennial Luvuvhu River and lush vegetation, they were filled with a sense of awe; they orchestrated one of the most brutal forced removals at the time.

Amongst the communities that were abruptly uprooted was the Ravele community, which was loaded onto GG-trucks and dumped more than seventy kilometers away from its ancestral land.

In 2004, just over 10 years into democracy, the Ravele community received 649 hectares of tropical land through the Restitution Programme of the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR).

The community opted for the Communal Property Association (CPA) as a land-holding entity and adopted its constitution in 2004.

As the CPA is limited to only holding the land, its members resolved to establish an operating company to run farming operations in terms of the Companies Act.

Since then the community is working very hard not only to make the restored farms productive but to defeat the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality amongst its beneficiaries.

At the helm of the community is the Chairperson of the Communal Property Association Mr Nthangeni Nelson Netshisahulu, a retired school principal.

The farming operations are conducted in 400 hectares of land and the company has divided the farms into four viable productive units managed by Farm Managers. The project is mainly farming with macadamia nuts, bananas and avocados.

The other 200 hectares which were restored in 2008 have been rented to a private entity as the focus was to save the 400 hectares from the under production suffered during the time of strategic partnership and poor management.

The management holds weekly meetings to handle production reports. Such meetings are also attended by two delegated representatives from the shareholders for monitoring purposes and also develop strategies for business capacitation.

The company now owns a fleet of movable assets such as tractors, spraying tankers, etc. that are of great significance in the quality production of the farms produce.

The company has created a staggering total of 179 permanent and 17 seasonal jobs to date and are earning in terms of Agricultural Sectoral Determination and in case the company makes profit, the workers receive the profit share equal to their monthly salaries.

“It is worth to note that the majority of the workers are recruited from the CPA members and the beneficiaries, and that has addressed the issue of joblessness,” said Mr Netshisahulu.

The Holding entity and the Ravele CPA have a bursary scheme for the beneficiaries who are learning at tertiary level. A total of 45 qualifying beneficiaries get R10 000 each annually and five beneficiaries students share R10 000 for achieving quality pass in their Grade 12 final examinations. The budget for this categories is R460 000.

The CPA also assists local schools with stationery and payments for educators for teaching during Saturday extra classes.

The CPA also provides assistance to the administration of the Traditional Council in terms of providing stationery and wages of the two office administrators to ensure that there is efficient and effective administration of the affairs of the community.

The community has a good story to tell. When you enter the farm, you will notice that the farm is not only productive, but the surrounding area, buildings, houses and machinery is looking very clean and neat.

**Ravele community working hard to push back the hands of poverty, unemployment and inequality**

